

Ex-CIA director says SALT aids U.S. spying

AS RECEIVED

By Richard Whittle
Washington Bureau of The News

WASHINGTON — Former CIA Director William Colby said Wednesday that President Reagan would commission an important aid to collecting intelligence on Soviet nuclear forces if he abandoned the SALT II arms-control treaty.



William Colby

Voluntary U.S. and Soviet compliance with the unratified 1979 treaty, which set limits on each side's nuclear arsenal, has forced Moscow to reveal valuable information about the size and nature of its forces and to leave deployment and testing of them open to U.S. observation, Colby said.

"The fact is that they have gradually been forced into an exposure of their strategic weaponry to a degree which is really quite startling," said Colby, who was CIA director in the early 1970s. "Abandoning it means we are back to the dark shadow of Russian tradition, trying to find out what they are doing without any extra help."

Reagan tentatively decided in May to drop U.S. compliance because of Soviet violations of the pact.

Walter Slocombe, a former Pentagon official who worked on the treaty for the Carter administration, joined Colby at a news conference to argue that Reagan should continue to comply.

"We have to be very careful to guard against the desire to cut off our noses to spite our face," Slocombe said, stipulating that he agrees with the administration's finding that the Soviets have violated several of the treaty's provisions.

As a candidate, Reagan denounced the second Strategic Arms Limitation Talks accord, signed by former President Jimmy Carter but never ratified by the Senate. But Reagan agreed after taking office in 1981 not to undercut the pact's terms if the Soviets did the same.

The treaty required both sides to leave their long-range nuclear weapons exposed so each could verify, by satellite reconnaissance, the other side's compliance with limits on nuclear weapons launchers.

SALT II specifically forbids either side to interfere with the other's reconnaissance satellites or to hide missile silos or mobile missiles. But without the pact, Slocombe said, the Soviets "can begin putting covers on things. They can begin shifting around, deliberately trying to confuse us."

Critics have complained that, among other violations, the Soviets have failed to comply with a SALT II ban on encoding "telemetry," the radio signals sent by test missiles to report the rockets' performance. Colby and Slocombe argued that Soviet compliance with other provisions was more important.

If the Soviets were to ignore the treaty's other provisions on openness, Colby said, U.S. intelligence still would be able to monitor Soviet forces, but the task would be much more difficult and costly.

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Don't short-sell SALT's value as window on USSR, some warn

Bucking the pact could cost US key data on Soviet arsenal

By Peter Grier

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

By walking away from SALT II, President Reagan will make it far more difficult for the United States to gather intelligence about Soviet nuclear arms, say critics of the move.

As well as weapon limits, the second strategic-arms limitation pact contains provisions intended to make it easier for both sides to keep track of the other's strategic arsenal. Without this prod the Soviets will revert to their natural habits of secrecy, and do such things as cover missile silos to hide them from prying Western eyes, according to these critics.

"We won't be confronted with a blank wall. But it will be much harder to find out what they are doing," says Walter Slocombe, a top Defense Department official during the Carter administration.

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— Walter Slocombe

One verification window Mr. Slocombe and other analysts fear will be closed is SALT's nonconcealment, noninterference rule. Basically, this provision states that neither side can hide from or spoof the other's spy satellites. Missile silos must not be roofed over; mobile missiles cannot be disguised as fuel trucks; lasers can't be used to blind satellite sensors.

Another window is the category of so-called "cooperative measures." These are steps that both sides are required to take so that the other knows what its satellite cameras are looking at. B-52 bombers capable of carrying nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, for instance, must look different than B-52s that can't carry such weapons. Each side must give prior notice of weapon tests involving more than one missile launch, and confine them to certain areas. Retired silos and missile subs must sit for a while with their lids up, so destruction can be verified by overhead photography.

A third provision bearing on intelligence gathering is the list of nuclear forces that each side must provide to the other. This has provided the US with a "data base" on USSR weapons, Slocombe says.

Because of the SALT agreement, therefore, the US knows far more about Soviet strategic weapons than it does about Soviet conventional forces. The US estimate of USSR tank production, for instance, is at best general and is the result of "enormous effort," says former CIA chief William Colby.

And without the help of SALT-provided verification aids, US estimates of Soviet strength may well be inflated. Mr. Colby says, because intelligence officers will be forced to make worst-case estimates with fuzzier data.

Administration critics admit that there is one SALT verification provision that the Soviets have flagrantly violated even while the treaty was tacitly being observed by both sides. Under SALT, much of the data beamed from missiles during tests is not supposed to be in code. But according to Reagan administration officials, the USSR encrypts up to 95 percent of such "telemetry" anyway.

But if the Reagan administration explicitly abandons SALT, then the US has no grounds for complaining about encryption.

For its part, the Soviet Union has asked the US for a list of information it feels it's missed because of encoding. But the US has refused on the grounds that by doing so, it would tip the Soviets off to US surveillance techniques.

Even with the encryption violation taken into account, the verification provisions of SALT work in the favor of the US, Colby and Slocombe say. The Soviets, they point out, would have no trouble keeping track of US forces even without the provisions, because of the relative openness of Western society. There is no Moscow edition of Aviation Week & Space Technology, however. The national technical means of spy satellites are the US's main source of information about Soviet forces.

Thus without SALT "we will lose an important advantage we have in terms of intelligence," Solcomb says.

SCRAPPING SALT 2 LIKENED TO CUTTING OFF NOSE TO SPITE FACE

BY MATTHEW C. QUINN

WASHINGTON

A — Former CIA Director William Colby said Wednesday the administration's plan to scrap the SALT 2 nuclear arms agreement would close an important window for peering in on Soviet military capabilities.

"We don't have a Moscow edition of Aviation Week" to read for data on Soviet weapons systems, Colby said, referring to the authoritative American journal that reports in detail on American military weaponry.

Colby, CIA director in the Nixon and Ford administrations, and Walter Slocombe, defense undersecretary in the Carter administration, argued during a news conference sponsored by the Arms Control Association that key SALT 2 verification provisions are of great use to U.S. intelligence.

If the agreement is scrapped, said Slocombe, "we will lose important advantages we have."

"We have to be very careful to guard against the desire to cut off our noses to spite our face," Slocombe said.

Taking that course, said Colby, "means we're back to the dark shadows of Russian tradition -- trying to find out what they're doing without any extra help.

"SALT 2 does not make them totally transparent by a long shot. They still have the basic thought process of trying to keep secrets," said Colby. "But the fact is they have gradually been forced into an exposure of their strategic weaponry to a degree which is really quite startling."

President Reagan announced in March that because of widespread Soviet violations of the 1979 agreement, signed by President Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev but never approved for ratification by the Senate, his administration would end its policy of voluntary compliance with its limits on strategic weaponry.

The United States is in compliance for now, but is scheduled to breach the limits this fall when new B-52 bombers carrying cruise missiles are deployed. However, Reagan said he would take Soviet behavior into consideration when he makes the final decision.

Colby and Slocombe agreed that the Soviets have violated the treaty, but characterized Reagan's response as overkill.

"The United States ought to judge whether it remains in treaties not primarily by consideration of abstract issues of international law, but by whether it serves our interest," Slocombe said.

They said SALT 2 gives the United States access to information on Soviet nuclear tests, requires Soviet notice of where test facilities are and what kinds of weapons are being used.

Those provisions, because the Soviets can get data on U.S. tests through other means, are an "unearned unilateral advantage" for the United States, Slocombe said.

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"It enables us to know in great detail things that 20 years ago we wouldn't have dreamed of knowing in terms of the precise location, precise characteristics, the precise numbers of all these different systems aimed at us," Colby said. "Are we going to go back into the business of having to chase for it, to look for every last one?"

Slocombe said the Soviets could respond to an American termination of its SALT 2 obligations by covering over test facilities to shield them from the view of U.S. satellites. "We'd lose a great deal of the information we have now," he said.